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COORDINATION QUESTIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM-WIDE PLAN OF ACTION FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

Report of the Secretary-General

Progress report on the implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development

SUMMARY

The present progress report has been prepared in response to a request of the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-fourth session. It indicates that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, prepared and launched by the Administrative Committee on Coordination on 15 March 1996, is a vehicle for implementing the revised System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, adopted by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at the second part of its thirty-fourth session, in 1994.

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1. At its thirty-second session, in 1992, the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended that the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (E/AC.51/1992/5), which represented the contribution by the organizations of the United Nations system to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, 1/ should be updated after each review of the implementation of the New Agenda by the General Assembly. The Committee also recommended that revisions be submitted for its consideration in 1994, 1996 and thereafter as it might decide. At its thirty-fourth session, in 1994, the Committee reaffirmed its previous recommendations to revise the System-wide Plan on a continuing basis and requested that a progress report on the implementation of the Plan be submitted for its consideration at its fall session in 1996. 2/ The present progress report is being submitted in response to that request.

2. As a follow-up to the System-wide Plan, adopted at the thirty-second session of the Committee in 1992 and revised at its thirty-fourth session, in 1994 (E/AC.51/1994/7), the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), at its second regular session in September 1994 in New York, devoted part of its agenda to the consideration of the issue of African economic recovery and development. ACC had before it a policy paper on African economic recovery and development: human resources, growth, equity and sustainable development, around which it carried out an in-depth discussion. It called for urgent measures to increase official development assistance flows to African countries. Among the options for follow-up action were the setting-up of a small, executive head-level committee or task force of ACC members and regular annual reviews to be conducted by ACC. The aim of the action was to identify major inter-agency initiatives to be taken in support of Africa and to define the required policy options to galvanize international support for African economic recovery and development. ACC decided to review the issue at its following session, which was scheduled to be held at Vienna in February 1995.

3. Shortly before that session, the Secretary-General addressed a letter to the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system, suggesting the establishment of a small steering group or committee of ACC, with a time-bound mandate, to be chaired by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In a letter to the ACC members, the Administrator of UNDP recommended that the Steering Committee be complemented by several working groups of ACC members, which would prepare concrete proposals for adoption by ACC at its fall session of 1995. The Steering Committee was directed to focus on specific priority issues, which were part of the priority programmes and activities that had been foreseen in the revised System-wide Plan of Action and be representative of the various categories of organizations comprising the system. The tasks identified by the Secretary-General included availability and management of water, sustainable food security, capacity-building for governance, social and human development and mobilization of external and internal financial resources for African development.

4. At its Vienna session in 1995, ACC established five working groups, which had the mandate to explore vigorously what the United Nations system of organizations could and should do to strengthen its support for Africa in the key areas of action, including water, food security, capacity-building for governance, social and human development, and resource mobilization. ACC also

decided to include African economic recovery and development as an item on the agenda of its second regular session of 1995 and requested the Steering Group to complete its work programme and submit proposals for follow-up action to ACC at that session.

5. During the time between the two sessions, the Steering Committee prepared the groundwork for and developed a special initiative on Africa. At its fall session of 1995, ACC confirmed its determination to launch the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa early in 1996 (ACC/1995/23, para. 10). At that session, executive heads confirmed their intention to bring the Special Initiative to the attention of their respective governing bodies, and to contribute actively to the campaign for mobilizing political commitment and support, so as to ensure the effective implementation of the Initiative.

6. The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa was launched on 15 March 1996 as a programme aimed at providing renewed impetus to Africa's development. Its 14 components are grouped into the following main themes: water, food security, capacity-building for governance, social and human development, including in particular basic education for all and basic health, and resource mobilization, which are equivalent to the tasks for the five working groups of the Steering Committee. It is the United Nations system's most significant mobilization of support ever for the development of a continent's people and its largest coordinated action. Its implementation will require up to US$ 25 billion over a period of 10 years, not including food security, and is subject to revision. Financing will come mainly from a redirection of existing resources at the national and international level, as well as from new resources.

7. For each of the major five components a lead United Nations agency or agencies will be responsible for resource mobilization and for coordinating implementation. ACC will monitor the implementation of the Special Initiative through a steering committee co-chaired by the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). For most of the priorities, the critical context for programmes will be at the country level.

8. The relationship between the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development has thus been clearly established. The Special Initiative complements the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, gives it new impetus and is its operational wing. The Special Initiative is a vehicle for implementing the System-wide Plan, galvanizing the organizations of the United Nations system for a vigorous and coordinated action with tangible results in Africa. It is also a means to mobilize political commitment and support both among Africa's development partners and within Africa.

9. The text of the Special Initiative is annexed to the annual overview report of ACC for 1995 (E/1996/18).

Notes

1/ Annex, sect. II to General Assembly resolution 46/151 of 18 December 1991.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/49/16), part one, paras. 71-78.